D R A F T

Salmonid Coalition Work Plan
Enhancement and Restoration of Salmonid Habitat Plan for Alexander Valley and Dry Creek Valleys of the Russian River Watershed That Provides Conservation and Economic Benefits to Sonoma Community

Introduction:

In response to the listing and final critical habitat designation for the California coastal chinook and the Central California coast steelhead, a collection of stakeholders are proposing to enhance and restore existing and historic habitat within the Alexander Valley and the Dry Creek Valley units of the Russian River watershed. Current stakeholders include: the Sonoma County Water Agency, United Winegrowers, Sonoma County Grape Growers' Association, Syar, Industries, Inc., Russian River Property Owners, Homebuilders Association of Northern California, the conservation community, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and National Marine Fisheries Service (hereinafter referred to as the Service).

Task 1. Identify Team

Purpose and Need - All private and public stakeholders are required to adhere to the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Stakeholders that represent a broad base of interests, as well as the agencies with jurisdiction, are being assembled to identify salmonid habitat conservation and enhancement projects in Dry Creek Valley and Alexander Valley of the Russian River watershed.

Goals and Objectives:

Within one year of the dated and signed *Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding* approved by the Homebuilders Association of Northern California, the Russian River Property Owners Association, the Sonoma County Grape Growers' Association, the Sonoma County Water Agency, Syar Industries, Inc., and the United Winegrowers this Team will draft a comprehensive plan that ensures stakeholders provide conservation and enhancement to salmonid habitat, whether efforts are voluntary or regulatory in nature, that result in a quantifiable net gain in recovery benefits.

The Team will develop a cooperative conservation strategy that is economically viable for the region and contributes to the recovery of the listed salmonid species. Conservation measures shall be long-term in nature, and enforceable in an appropriate manner The team understands that the Service will determine whether the conservation strategies, or individual measures, are adequate to protect listed species under the Endangered Species Act. One possible result of such determinations is that the Service may determine to remove Alexander and Dry Creek Valleys of the Russian River watershed from critical habitat designation or to provide other forms of assurance that performance of the cooperative conservation strategy will constitute compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

Team:

Agencies/Public Entities

· Board of Public Utilities
· California Department of Fish & Game

· National Marine Fisheries Service
· Natural Resources Conservation Service
· Sonoma County Water Agency
· Water Advisory Committee

Private Stakeholders
· Homebuilders Association of Northern California
· Russian River Property Owners Association
· Sonoma County Grape Growers' Association
· Syar Industries, Inc.
· United Winegrowers

Task 2. Identify Commitments

(Commitments specific to the Dry Creek and Alexander Valley Units of the Russian River watershed)

Proposed Commitments:

1.1 NMFS along with CDFG will identify and prioritize mainstem reaches and tributaries where, after evaluation, preservation, conservation and restoration actions may be appropriate.

1.2 In coordination with the AB 2121 Steering Committee, propose solutions for in-stream flow conditions.

1.3 The Team will collaboratively work to propose industry-specific best management practices to protect salmonids and their habitat.

1.4 The Team will collaboratively work to evaluate potential changes to existing local County regulations that conflict with NMFS guidelines regarding the extraction of gravel and sand from the Russian River. The goal is to enhance salmonid habitat.

1.5 The Team will coordinate the cooperative conservation plan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the SCWA's Russian River Section 7 consultation process to ensure consistency.

1.6 The Team will collaboratively work to develop and implement a series of programs to promote and to effect the use of recycled water for agricultural purposes, and for irrigation in existing and future commercial and residential developments in order to reduce average daily potable municipal water use.

1.7 The Team will collaboratively work to establish standards for more efficient water use in future commercial and residential developments in order to reduce average daily water consumption.

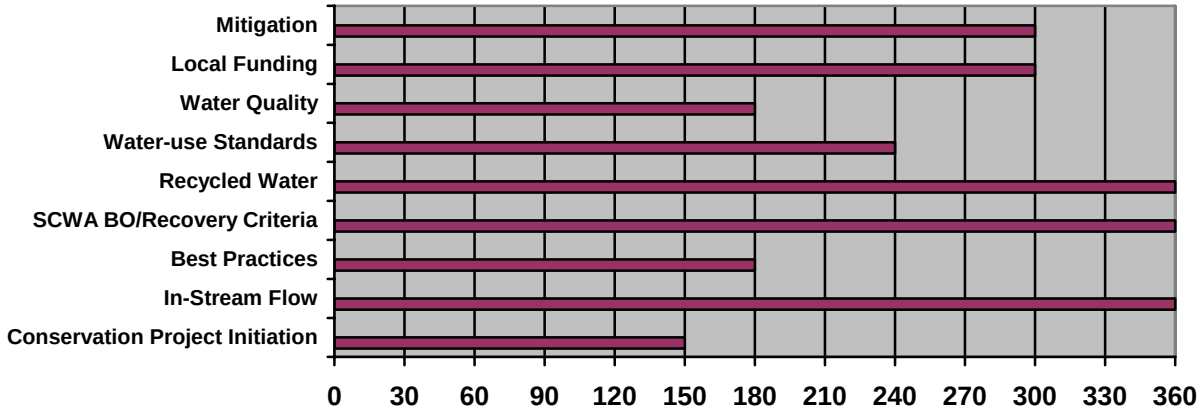
1.8 The Team will collaboratively work to develop and implement best management practices to improve water quality for salmonids.

1.9 The Team will collaboratively work to develop and implement local, state and federal funding mechanisms that provide funds for habitat conservation and enhancement.

1.10 The Team will collaboratively work to develop and implement a program that is economically feasible and is designed to i) prevent, and/or ii) mitigate, and/or iii) compensate for impacts to aquatic resource functions and values. The program will include an adaptive management process that is collaborative and public, provides accountability through monitoring and ongoing analysis, and identifies appropriate enforcement mechanisms.

1.11 The Team will collaboratively work to identify criteria for recovery and the collective, comprehensive measures that will meet that criterion.

Projected Timeline for Recommendations:



Task 3. Public Involvement

Public Involvement is to be included at key times and where applicable. The team should identify public involvement techniques that will be used in development of the cooperative conservation strategy and how to respond to and incorporate public input into the final strategy.

a. Goals for the public involvement efforts are:

• Develop opportunities for the public and various stakeholders to provide input at key stages in the development process
• Develop ongoing educational efforts as strategy progresses
• Provide a strong understanding of the key issues, concerns to the public and stakeholders.
• Provide a solid foundation for communications that will help manage expectations.

b. Tasks to be accomplished may include:

• Community input sessions
• Communication updates
• Group presentations/meetings
• Media contact/newsletters
• Web site and e-mail

Task 4. Scientific Peer Review

As part of finalizing the cooperative conservation strategy, the Team will submit its strategy to independent experts for review and input. The selected reviewers shall prepare an analysis of the cost/benefit of the strategy to the listed salmonids. As part of the process the team, in the final strategy, will respond to the comments of the peer reviewers, and to the extent appropriate incorporate recommended changes.

Task 5. Local Jurisdiction Ordinances/Regulatory Mechanisms

The local, state and federal agencies have regulatory authority and permitting responsibilities in the implementation of the cooperative conservation strategy. The development of agreements among these agencies and/or with private stakeholders would facilitate effective coordination of their activities to implement the strategy.

The cooperative conservation strategy will set forth biological goals, objectives and methodology necessary to conserve salmonids. The Team will work closely with local jurisdictions to provide an implementation planning process to ensure that the cooperative conservation strategy is applied to cover public and private water needs, sand and gravel extraction needs, agricultural activities, and future commercial and residential development.

Task 6. Outreach and Education

Creating change through communication of conservation efforts

- Partner with the Sonoma County Water Agency and Board of Public Utilities to provide funding for local conservation activities, outreach and educational programs.
- Partner with local jurisdictions and the Northern California Home Builders to provide publications and guides to existing and new homeowners to help them plant a water-efficient landscape, and to care for the landscape in a water-wise manner.
- Seek cooperative conservation funding to expand water conservation education programs within the K-12 schools in Sonoma County.
- Partner with Sonoma County Grapegrowers to implement education programs that promote Best Management Practices to enhance water quality and promote water conservation.
- Partner with existing conservation groups to expand outreach and education programs.

Task 7. Adaptive Management

Given the complexity of the ecological system of this effort, there is a need for an adaptive management process. Adaptive management is defined as “a process for implementing policy decisions as an ongoing activity that requires monitoring and adjustment”. (USDA Forest

Service, 1995) Adaptive management will be used to apply scientific principles and methods to improve salmonid habitat and provide for its future management.

"One of the fundamental tenets of adaptive management is that ecosystems and people are unpredictable as they evolve together. Ecosystems change as do the people that attempt to understand and manage them." (USDA Forest Service, 1995)

To successfully implement the cooperative conservation strategy, adaptive management must be integrated into implementation. Adaptive management will at a minimum: 1) on an ongoing basis to the extent appropriate collect, evaluate and incorporate scientific data that might improve the cooperative conservation strategy; 2) monitor information on an individual and collective basis regarding conservation and enhancement actions; and 3) identify an appropriate enforcement mechanism(s).